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Fund our Communities
Bring our War Dollars Home!



Continued from page 3...

» **An outsize security establishment**

The US intelligence community is so vast that more people have Top Secret clearance than live in Washington, DC. We have 16 different intelligence agencies, employing 200,000 people, at an estimated cost of \$75 billion annually. Besides redundancy and inefficiency, such a huge security establishment represents a serious threat to American civil liberties. The Cato Institute recommends a cut of at least 15% to intelligence, saving \$112 billion over the next decade.

» **Waste, fraud and abuse**

Unlike other Federal agencies, the Department of Defense cannot pass an audit. It does not accurately track its assets and thus is particularly susceptible to waste and fraud. Congress should refuse to allocate any additional money to the DoD until it can account for the billions of dollars it has already been given. The Institute for Policy Studies estimates potential annual savings of \$15 billion from contracting improvements at the Pentagon. We cannot really know how much could be saved in this category without an audit of the DoD.

» **Summary**

A military strategy based on defense of the American people, as opposed to global power projection, would free up hundreds of billions of dollars. That money is needed in our communities—for jobs, climate protection, health care, education, and social services.

A Modest Proposal

US military spending is higher than it has been since World War II, at a level difficult to justify by any threats to the American people.

A close look at US military spending shows that it is directed toward threats posed by conventional opponents such as the Soviet Union. That is, we are preparing to fight the last war.

At the same time, we have unmet needs that affect our security adversely, such as climate protection, infrastructure repair, human services, lack of health care and inferior education. Cutting military spending would allow us to address those crucial problems.

“ There are no real seriously armed enemies left in the world that can possibly justify an \$800 billion national defense and security establishment .”

*— David Stockman
former budget
director for President
Ronald Reagan*

Both progressive and conservative think tanks and leaders have recently put forth proposals for specific, sustainable cuts to the military budget. For example, Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA) has proposed a cut of 25% from military spending. Cutting military spending to that level would enhance our security, not decrease it, and we echo Rep. Frank’s call. We present ideas for specific reductions below, but in the words of Cato Institute military analysts Benjamin Friedman and Christopher Preble, “The cuts we suggest are a kind of initial harvest of restraint. They do not preclude consideration of further reductions.” Before identifying what to cut, we suggest what should be untouched.

Continued on page 2...

What Not to Cut from the Military Budget

- » **Pay and benefits for servicemen and women and veterans**
- » **Health care for servicemen and women and veterans**
- » **Protective gear for active duty personnel**

We can cut the military budget dramatically without harming veterans or active-duty members of the armed forces. The best way to protect our service members—while saving billions of dollars—is to stop engaging in unnecessary wars. Let's support our troops by reducing the number of them in harm's way and by ensuring their access to medical and mental health services.

What to Cut from the Military Budget

» **Expensive and redundant weapons systems**

A large part of the military budget funds the purchase and maintenance of weapons designed for “conventional” enemies, of which we have none; these weapons are outdated relics of the Cold War. We could save billions of dollars annually by retiring them—and not purchasing new ones. Specific cuts could come from reducing or eliminating the following weapons systems: Ballistic Missile Defense; Virginia-Class Submarine; V-22 Osprey; Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle; F-35 Joint Strike Fighter; and Offensive Space Weapons. Cutting unnecessary weapons systems could result in a savings of up to \$302 billion by 2020.

» **Unnecessary foreign military bases**

The US has 865 foreign military bases, exclusive of those in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many are a legacy of World War II with no relationship to US security. Why, for example, do we need 268 bases in Germany? And can't Japan defend itself?

The report by the co-chairs of the bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform recommends cutting foreign military bases by one third. Others have recommended cutting considerably more. Different analysts

use different assumptions in estimating the costs of operating and maintaining these bases and, thus, the cost savings for closing them. The Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) estimates the total cost of foreign military bases (not including those in Iraq and Afghanistan) at \$250 billion per year. The IPS analysis is based on the fact that so many servicemen and women are stationed abroad; bringing them home would dramatically reduce military costs. The savings for closing half of our foreign bases could range anywhere from \$8.5 billion to \$125 billion per year, depending on which bases were closed and what assumptions are used in counting savings.

» **Costly foreign wars**

In fiscal year 2011, the Pentagon will spend at least \$158 billion in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have already spent over a trillion dollars in direct costs in these two countries since 2002 and many more billions in indirect costs. Many analysts believe that these wars, rather than making Americans safer, have increased the number of our enemies, thus making us more vulnerable. Safely redeploying our servicemen and women from Afghanistan and Iraq would free up billions of dollars annually with no loss to our security.

» **Nuclear weapons**

The current Administration has included \$85 billion in its latest budget for maintenance and modernization of the nuclear weapons infrastructure over the next decade, plus at least \$100 billion for maintenance and modernization of nuclear weapons delivery vehicles. The bipartisan Report of the Sustainable Defense Task Force suggests cutting our nuclear arsenal to 500 deployed warheads—saving \$100 billion. The US should quickly get down to 500 on the way to global abolition of all nuclear weapons.

» **The size of our standing armed services**

The Pentagon employs 2.5 million full-time civilian and military personnel, excluding part-time National Guard and Reserve members, making it the largest employer in the country. The US has no enemy, or combination of enemies, which requires such a large standing army to make us safe. We should therefore reduce its size to a level commensurate with the security risks we face today. The Cato Institute recommends cutting the active-duty Army to 360,000 and the Marine Corps to 145,000, saving \$287 billion over the next ten years.

» **Mercenaries**

A particularly egregious expense is that for private security services, that is, mercenaries. Some of these soldiers-for-hire make up to \$250,000 per year, and they are essentially unaccountable to the military—or anyone else—for their actions. Those actions have in many cases damaged US security by causing our former friends to turn against us. Eliminating mercenaries would save an admittedly unknown amount of money, but more importantly, remove the harm they do to our national security.